

CONSERVATION

Chemicals Dumped at Howland's Landing

By AMY ROLLINS

High school lab chemicals found at Howland's Landing may have been dumped by a stolen truck, according to the owner of a hazardous waste disposal company hired to remove them.

Keystone Environmental Inc. was contracted by three Boston high schools to remove laboratory chemicals and animal parts last month. Rick Fagan, owner of the Rockland-based company told the *Cape Cod Times* last week that the company truck was stolen in Weymouth and returned to Rockland without the five-gallon buckets removed from Boston. Fagan lives in Duxbury on Federal Eagle Road.

"It's under investigation and I've been instructed not to say

anything about it," Fagan said in response to questions about the truck.

Rockland Police Officer Tony Direnzo said the truck was reported stolen to the Weymouth police on July 11. "The truck was stolen in Weymouth from a supposedly secure area with seven barrels of hazardous waste in the back. I recovered the empty truck one-fourth of a mile away from the company's office in the Ramada Inn parking lot," he said.

Direnzo said agents from the attorney general's office have taken over investigation of the case. He speculated that they may be comparing this incident with similar incidents state-

continued on page 12.

Duxbury Clipper

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continued from page one

wide. "I've been a police officer for 27 years and I've never seen them get this involved in a case like this," he said. "I think there's a lot more to it."

Marcia Cohen, spokeswoman for Attorney General Tom Reilly, confirmed that their office is investigating the dumping.

"We are taking the matter seriously. We are meeting with various police departments and state agencies," she said.

A green trash barrel was found in Duxbury at Howland's Landing, off Crescent Street, full of lab chemicals and animal specimens on July 11. A week later, more lab materials washed up on Cape Cod beaches.

An employee of Duxbury's Lands and Natural Resources Department found the green barrel and notified the authorities, according to Director Peter Buttkus. Buttkus said they found cardboard boxes full of the scientific materials including animal pieces and formaldehyde. He also said the boxes were neatly packed into the barrel and one of them was labeled Boston Latin High School with the classroom number the materials may have originated from.

"We removed the barrel very carefully," said Buttkus. "There was no damage done to the town landing and we removed the hazard from the public area."

Director of Public Works Walter Tonaszuck said he called the Department of Environmental Protection because he wanted the case prosecuted. He said a strike force from the DEP came to Duxbury to examine the chemicals.

"That barrel was right near the edge of the asphalt and if we had heavy rain or wind, all those chemicals would have been in the bay," he said. "We might have had shellfish contamination and other pollution problems. The people from the state were very concerned."

Tonaszuck said he was told the chemicals found matched with a manifest also found by the strike force. He said the chemicals in Duxbury appeared to be less hazardous than those on the manifest which were not found.

"I think it's a terribly stupid thing for someone to have done," he said. "But it had to be someone who knew Howland's Landing, to know that's there you have to know the town well."

Edmund Coletta, a spokes-

man for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection confirmed that three Boston city schools had hired a licensed hazardous waste hauler to clear out old or unwanted science laboratory materials. Coletta said that last week, five-gallon plastic tubs washed up on Chatham beaches, and the contents were identified as the same found on the Duxbury shore.

According to Coletta, the lab materials included floral pieces, formaldehyde, bullfrog parts, pig hearts, muscles, and bivalves. He said the chemicals could be anything from a harmless nutrient broth to a more serious chemical.

The chemicals found in Duxbury represent about 2/3 of the total chemicals listed as taken from the Boston schools, Coletta said. "They are all self-contained so far," he said. "Each chemical and animal part has been in a plastic peanut-butter sized jar."

Coletta said that none of the chemicals are harmful if they are handled properly. He instructs anyone who comes across them not to touch them, and to call the proper authorities.

People with information about the laboratory specimens or chemicals are asked to notify the Department of Environmental Protection at 1-888-304-1133, or the Duxbury Police Department.